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Human Rights Council
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Agenda items 3, 4 and 9
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Note verbale dated 30 September 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to provide herewith a copy of a letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic addressed to the High Commissioner (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto* as a document of the thirty-third session of the Human Rights Council under agenda items 3, 4 and 9.

* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 30 September 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic addressed to the High Commissioner for Human Rights

I am writing to you with regard to your statement made at the opening of the 33rd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on September 13, where you noted that your "Office has had no access to the conflict situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, including since the events of April 2016. Consequently, conflicting claims of human rights violations cannot be verified, and the plight of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people and refugees has not received the kind of human rights scrutiny that it deserves".

While highly appreciating your willingness to verify the information on human rights violations in the context of the April events, I want to note the absence of any appeal for access to Nagorno Karabakh forwarded from your Office to the authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

We recognize that your Office is mandated to pursue protection and promotion of human rights anywhere in the world guided by the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity.

We regret that for more than two decades the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has not been able to visit our Republic and not even after the Azerbaijani aggression this April. In our view, the OHCHR should be able to verify well-documented cases of massive and grave human rights violations and war crimes committed by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces both against Nagorno Karabakh civilian population and its military personnel. We strongly believe that the international community has to react to these crimes in order to prevent their recurrence; otherwise, the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators would encourage further use of force by Azerbaijan against the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

We are convinced that the people of Nagorno Karabakh are entitled and should exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms as any other people around the globe, without distinction of any kind. The elected authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic are making constant efforts to ensure that every person can equally enjoy all the rights enshrined in the international human rights acquis. Although the NKR has not been in a position to formally take on commitments before international organizations due to the lack of the membership to the international organizations, we have, nevertheless, unilaterally acceded to a number of international conventions and covenants such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Cultural Convention.

Let me assure you that the authorities of Nagorno Karabakh Republic are very open to have a genuine cooperation with the OHCHR with a view of strengthening democratic norms and principles as well as protection of human rights in situations of conflict.

Mr. High Commissioner,

Allow me, on behalf of the authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic to invite you to visit Nagorno Karabakh or to dispatch your team in order to make an impartial and objective assessment of the human rights situation and the crimes perpetrated against people of Nagorno Karabakh in April this year.

(*Signed*) Karen Mirzoyan

Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Nagorno Karabakh Republic